

Words can hurt

There are many mysteries in life, but I am most puzzled by the immense power that words wield. Why do words have such power to hurt, break and discourage a person? I am an extremely sensitive person, and especially so to the words that people use on me. An evil or careless arrow shot by others can cause a wound on me that takes ages to heal. However, it is implausible to pass a day without words, and I have come to accept that getting shot one day is inevitable.

Cathy was the walking answer sheet in my class in primary school. Her Chinese comprehension was close to perfect; her science MCQ paper always scored an A; and her mathematics results steadfastly remained at hundred percent in all tests. Whilst other students were tackling some challenging problem sums, Cathy breezed through the same questions as if she had been repeatedly doing them for the past one year. With her big round glasses and small pug nose, Cathy was not an attractive person. However, she was popular amongst my classmates as she could be depended upon to give the correct answers. Due to her obvious intelligence, I often approached her for 'private tuition'.

One day, as usual, I consulted Cathy on a certain math problem sum. Much to my dismay, even after her repeated explanations, I remained confused. With a frustrated sigh, Cathy said 'You are just not gifted in math.' I froze for a split second, hardly believing my ears. Of all people, Cathy was the last person whom I had to protect myself from, or so I thought. For years, I have suspected that I was not proficient in mathematics, but I never dwell much on it. That it was her who shot that cruel arrow was too much for me to bear. I turned away.

I spent the rest of the day agonizing over Cathy's comment. Her words had burst my bubble of one day being a math whiz. Why am I not the ideal me? Why must I be hopeless when it comes to numbers? Suddenly, I lose the confidence and interest in Mathematics, believing that I was incapable of solving difficult sums. I wished that the world would end right here and then.

It was only a few days later when the initial sting had faded that I sat down and reasoned things with myself. The practical side of me knew that I was overly sensitive to people's comments. I recalled my mother's words of how everybody is entitled to his own opinions, but they might not necessarily be right. Thus, I came to the conclusion that it was silly of me to believe in Cathy's words more than in myself.

Yes, words do hurt; they have the power to tear down a person's self-esteem. However, the wound would heal, with a scar to take its place. Today, when I reflect back on the days when my confidence level plunged, there would always be a bittersweet feeling in me. Words can hurt. This, I believe.